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ABSTRACT

To meet the needs of immigrant children and their families, educators can collaborate with community agencies. This paper discusses the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit, an agency that has historically addressed the needs of immigrants by collaborating with schools and other community agencies. The paper first describes the history and philosophy of the Institute and women's educational programs offered by the Institute. Next, interagency collaborations of the Institute are discussed, specifically collaborations with (1) public schools, (2) social services and communication agencies, (3) government agencies, and (4) industry and business. Finally, the paper discusses the effectiveness of the Institute, using multiple definitions of interagency collaboration. (Contains 29 references.) (Author/HTH)

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A Historical Case Study on Interagency Collaboration for Culturally Diverse Immigrant Children and Families

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Abstract

To meet the needs of immigrant children and their families, educators can collaborate with community agencies. This paper discusses the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit, an agency that has historically addressed the needs of immigrants by collaborating with schools and other community agencies. The paper first describes the history and philosophy of the Institute and women's educational programs offered by the Institute. Next, interagency collaborations of the Institute are discussed, specifically collaborations with (1) public schools, (2) social services and communication agencies, (3) government agencies, and (4) industry and business. Finally, the effectiveness of the Institute is discussed using multiple definitions of interagency collaboration.

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The immigrant population of the United States is increasing dramatically: Fix and Zimmermann (1993) state that "immigrants now account for 35 percent of the net annual population increase in the United States; immigrants and their children account for more than 50 percent.... the number of first- and second-generation immigrants ages 5 to 14 ... will almost double in the next 20 years and will account for more than half of the increase in that population cohort" (p. 18).

As a result of this increased immigration, a large number of culturally and linguistically diverse children are entering public schools. (For further details on recent immigration in the United States and globally, see Bhavnagri, 2001.) Many of these children do not speak English or have limited proficiency in English. Furthermore, their families' parenting goals, child-rearing practices, and peer and school socialization expectations may differ from those of mainstream Americans of European descent (Patel, Power, & Bhavnagri, 1996). Thus, teachers are being challenged to address the needs of these children and their families.

Currently, educators and other practitioners are asked to be culturally sensitive and knowledgeable about the diverse backgrounds of the children with whom they work (Bhavnagri & Gonzalez-Mena, 1997; Gonzalez-Mena & Bhavnagri, 2000, 2001). Meeting the needs of children who come from so many countries and speak so many languages is no small task.

To further complicate the matter, teachers are asked to perform multiple roles in the classroom (Bhavnagri & Vaswani, 1999). They have to be social workers, health personnel, nutritionists, and inclusive teachers; work with families and communities; design a high-quality curriculum; be accountable to multiple stakeholders through students' performance assessment; and address state and national standards. Given these daunting tasks, educators need to avail themselves of multiple resources to help them meet the needs of immigrant families, and they will need to know about existing community agencies that are culturally sensitive to and supportive of these families. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the value of agencies and institutions working in synchrony to support the lives of new immigrants.

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There is empirical evidence to suggest that home-school partnerships that include community involvement are effective in bringing about school reform, professional development of teachers, and, most importantly, students' academic success (e.g., Comer, 1997; Epstein, 1995, 1996; Weiner, 1993). Scholarship also indicates that interagency collaboration is essential with populations who have special needs (e.g., Roberts, Rule, & Innocenti, 1998). When scholars discuss special needs, they typically focus on children who are physically, socially, intellectually, or emotionally challenged; however, less is written about children who have special needs because they are immigrants. Scholars in the field of bilingual education and English as a second language do focus on immigrant children; however, they typically focus on the development of curriculum within the classroom to enhance students' language competencies (e.g., Rong & Preissle, 1998). Very little is written about how educators and schools can collaborate with community agencies to support the needs of these immigrant children and their families.

In other words, those who advocate for interagency collaboration do not typically address its importance for immigrant populations, and those who advocate for immigrant populations do not typically discuss the importance of interagency collaboration. We will therefore discuss a case study of one such agency—the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit—that has historically addressed the needs of immigrants by collaborating with schools and other community agencies. Because this agency has also been referred to elsewhere as "The International Institute," "The International Institute of Detroit," and "The Detroit International Institute," we will use similar terminology. This case study is primarily based on the archival data titled *International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit Records (1919-1981)* (IIMDR) at the Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

Creation of the International Institute in Detroit

History and Philosophy

The International Institute movement began under the leadership of the YWCA. Edith Terry Bremer, who was a social welfare and settlement house worker, established the first Institute in New York City in 1910. "Its purpose was to assist newly arrived and second generation immigrant girls and women by providing English classes, recreational and club activities, and assistance in dealing with housing, employment, naturalization, and other problems" (Mohl, 1982b, p. 118). The YWCA opened a Department of Immigration and Foreign Communities at the end of World War I to provide social services by forming International Institutes in industrial cities that had large ethnic populations. Thus, some 55 Institutes were started in many cities; the International Institute in Detroit was founded in 1919.

Mohl (1981, 1982a, 1982b) has extensively studied Bremer's contribution to International Institutes. He views her philosophy as insightful, visionary, and relevant even today. For example, Bremer noted that because of America's involvement in World War I, the American public had a schizophrenic response to immigrants. She noted that, on the one hand, many Americans viewed immigrants with suspicion as "foreigners" and wanted to have nothing to do with them. On the other hand, many Americans advocated active involvement on their own part as well as the immigrants' part to make sure they joined the fabric of American society. According to Bremer, Americans rejected immigrants because of ignorance and their "arrogant assumption that everything American was intrinsically superior to anything foreign" (Mohl, 1982a, p. 39). She further stated that there was fear and hate fanned by war, which created a sharp division between immigrants and nonimmigrants.

Given this problem, her solution was to have a philosophy and a policy of cultural pluralism for the International Institutes. It was a conscious venture on her part to promote what she called "a new democracy" and "a new social class of mankind," where individuals could find similarities that transcended nationality and race. She stated that there is equal worth in all races. The International Institute's response to this issue was to attempt to validate the original cultures with Folk Festivals. Institute personnel believed that such festivals would provide public recognition of parents that would engender added respect from their children.

Women's Educational Programs

Mohl (1982a) reports that the YWCA first focused on the education of women, especially women who had migrated from small towns and farms to industrial cities such as Detroit. The local YWCA workers would receive these newcomers at the railroad station and provide them with career education, such as typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping, so that they could find what they considered "respectable employment." Additionally, as a Christian organization, they gave these women regular religious education through sermons and services. The YWCA workers believed that this evangelical preaching helped these women maintain their virtue amid the temptations of an evil city.

During the early 20th century, these YWCAs were awakened to the Women's Movement, resulting in a paradigm shift in their approach to education for women. They became interested in women as women. As a result, their educational approach shifted beyond moral uplifting to social activism in areas that affected women, such as public health, industrial and labor reform legislation, suffrage and women's rights, temperance, the peace movement, and political reform. It is worth noting here that during that era women were legally barred from voting. It was in this spirit of activism that the YWCA began the International Institute to work with foreign-born women. Thus, when the Institutes began, their focus was primarily on educating immigrant women—from a social activism perspective.

Typically, these Institutes hired foreign-born multilingual women and girls who could communicate with the immigrant women and girls in their native languages. These teachers were called "nationality workers." They taught English in the immigrant's native language as well as in English. While the Institute held to its philosophy of ethnic consciousness and cultural pluralism, it did not hesitate to promote the teaching and learning of English. The International Institute's archival records state that "a knowledge of English will do away with one of the most important impediments in the path of the foreign born. It will enable the immigrant worker to be better understood, for the language handicap added to the lack of industrial training makes the adjustment from the quiet farms of Europe to the roaring factories of Detroit a thousand percent more difficult" (Box 3, Folder 22, IIMDR). Because the teachers and learners had similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds, a rapport was established during the teaching-learning process. Originally, these classes were small and informal and were held in the immigrants' homes or in neighborhood nationality halls, because the immigrant women were reluctant to attend formal classes and their husbands did not want them to venture too far from home. The nationality workers, knowing their adult learners, integrated educational activities along with social and recreational gatherings in these informal household settings. Eventually, as the instruction in English became more formalized, regular classes were held at the Institute. These formal classes were eventually opened up to men as well.

The International Institutes paid great attention to what was labeled "the second-generation problem" or set of tensions that developed between American-born children and their immigrant parents (Mohl, 1981). Because the YWCA sponsored the Institutes at this time, the mother-daughter relationship received the most attention (Box 1, Folder 29, IIMDR). Girls had to simultaneously adjust to employment, new independence, and financial obligations to their birth families while facing a conflict of cultures in an industrial setting. The 1920 census indicated that second-generation girls were employed as follows: 30% in manufacturing, 10% in trade, 12% in professional service, 16% in domestic and personal care occupations, and 26% in clerical jobs (Box 3, Folder 19, IIMDR).

The archival data stated that the typical problems of adolescence were now compounded by conflicting cultures, standards of conduct, and economic conditions (Box 3, Folder 19, IIMDR). The International Institute in Detroit, therefore, hosted Mother-Daughter Weeks, where mothers from various nationality groups demonstrated to their daughters their traditional crafts and ethnic customs and then explained the reasons behind them. One year, this event was judged so successful that it was extended into a second week (Box 3, Folder 19, IIMDR).

The Institute's archival data state that "special classroom work with women is given important recognition in the Detroit Public Evening School system" (Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR). In 1927, there

were 35 such classes in 25 centers with a total enrollment of 575. Sessions were held in the afternoon and taught by the same teachers who conducted the evening classes. Passage of the Cable Act that allowed women to become U.S. citizens independently, rather than as adjuncts of their husbands, stimulated class attendance (Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR).

Interagency Collaborations of the International Institute in Detroit

Public School Collaboration

Immigrants by the 1920s were concentrated in cities in the North and Midwest, such as Detroit. Pound (1940) reports that between 1910 and 1920, Detroit's population increased 111%, from 465,766 to 993,678. Child labor laws and compulsory school attendance were more strictly enforced in the North and Midwest, including in Detroit, than in the South (Box 3, Folder 19, 1928, IIMDR). The International Institute in Detroit collaborated with public schools to offer special classes in English for the foreign-born children. In 1927, there were as many as 17 such classes, reaching out to 416 children who probably spoke no English or had a very limited knowledge of it. The Institute's archival data report that "special attention was given to these foreign children's classes in order to give them in as short a time as possible sufficient knowledge of English to grade them in their proper grades. Many of these children were new arrivals in the country, and some very interesting experiments were carried out with these children" (Box 3, Folder 15, 1928, IIMDR). Regretfully, the archival documents do not describe these "interesting experiments." We assume that perhaps the teachers used some innovative strategies for teaching English at a rapid rate in order to help the immigrants catch up with their peers. These were the efforts they reported for reaching the first-generation immigrant children.

Because the archives do not mention teaching English to second-generation immigrant children, educators perhaps had to invest comparatively less in teaching them English. They only report that they had a very high volume of these second-generation youth enrolled in school. However, their school census tabulators were less concerned with numerical enrollment data and were, instead, more interested in "ways of understanding and serving the child from the 'foreign' home" (Box 3, Folder 19, 1930, IIMDR).

The two innovative strategies they introduced to reach out to these children were the introduction of the visiting teacher program and provision of vocational counselors. Both of these services were already a part of the public schools with which they were collaborating. They believed that these two approaches "while of great value to all children are of inestimable value to American born children of foreign parentage" (Box 3, Folder 19, 1930, IIMDR). They were not referring to classroom teachers doing home visits. Instead, these teachers' primary job was to visit homes and communities, and to strengthen interagency collaborations, for the well-being of children and families. (For further details regarding the home-community visits by visiting teachers, kindergarten teachers, and settlements workers for diverse populations, see Bhavnagri and Krolikowski, 2000.)

It is unclear from the archival data if the Institute provided high school education exclusively for first-generation immigrant adolescents. However, based on our readings, we conjecture that the high school education that the Detroit Public Schools offered to all Detroit residents in the evenings in collaboration with the Institute was most likely attended by these adolescent immigrants as well. We think this collaboration played out in the following manner: The Detroit Public Schools continued teaching their formal and prescribed academic curriculum; however, when they felt that their high school students needed additional education in English and in preparation for citizenship, they would recommend that they also attend courses in English and citizenship that were offered at the International Institute of Detroit. Another possible scenario could be that adolescents who were initially interested only in the survival skills of English proficiency and citizenship preparation were eventually encouraged by the International Institute of Detroit to further their education and take a high school diploma in the Detroit Public Schools. Thus, through collaboration, they were optimizing their available resources and attempting to provide not fragmented services, but seamless services—an approach that is recommended even today (Rosenblum, DiCecco, Taylor, & Adelman, 1995).

Social Services and Communication Agencies Collaboration

The International Institute in Detroit had a formal and yet a very close relationship with the Michigan State Employment Service to help immigrants who had language difficulties find jobs. They provided encouragement, which many immigrants needed (Sickels, 1951). The Institute received referrals from many public and private social service agencies, such as the United Community Services Nationality Department, Veterans Administration, United Foundations, Red Cross, Catholic Charities, Visiting Teachers, Women's Hospital Social Services, American Cancer Society, Salvation Army, Methodist Children's Home, County Department of Social Welfare, Detroit Orthopedic Clinic, Traveler's Aid, Grosse Pointe Woods Community Club, Legal Aid Bureau, and Polish Relief Organization (Kwitkowsky, 1955).

When the individual cases were referred by these agencies, the "intake recording" (the initial data gathering through interviews) included the ethnic origin of the clients. This recording was done because the International Institute workers were required to provide services based on the identity and cultural patterns of living within a specific ethnic group. They did not label the ethnicity by nationality because particular ethnic groups could be living in more than one country (e.g., Armenians could be from Turkey or Greece). Furthermore, often a country would have many subcultures, and therefore it was necessary to specify their ethnicity (e.g., immigrants from what once was Yugoslavia were specifically labeled as Serbian, Croatians, Slovenians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, or Montenegrins).

According to Mostert (1998), successful school-community collaboration necessitates understanding the many diverse kinds of families, their belief systems, and their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. He further states that there are five positive outcomes from gathering information on family diversity: (1) we gain the family's perspective; (2) we become acquainted with their cultural uniqueness, which then helps us to offer culturally sensitive intervention; (3) we eliminate any biases and mistaken impressions; (4) we increase our possibilities of efficient action; and (5) we increase the opportunities of the families to interact with us. Thus, the in-depth individual case recording done by the Detroit International Institute perhaps led to these positive outcomes.

The social services that were provided by the International Institute were related to the Immigration and Naturalization processes; educational and vocational guidance; personal, family, and marital adjustment; physical illnesses; and mental illnesses (Kwitkowsky, 1955). At times, they provided these social services directly to their clients, while at other times, they served as mediators between the newcomers and various agencies. For example, Mohl (1982b) reports that International Institutes collaborated with the Red Cross, and then Red Cross training was given to immigrant mothers and girls at the Institutes.

The International Institutes of America—which were offshoots of the YWCA—used to also work with communication agencies, such as the radio and the foreign-language press in order to reach out to pockets of immigrant communities in urban areas (Mohl, 1982a). They used the media to publicize their activities and promote their educational goals. The workers at the Institutes translated materials related to legal subjects, unemployment, relief, housing, and other topics of importance to immigrants. Many International Institutes also put out their own monthly newsletters, pamphlets, and similar publications.

Government Agencies Collaboration

The Detroit International Institute closely, actively, continuously, and effectively worked with the local consuls to assist them with a variety of concerns and challenges related to the immigration process. Specifically, the institutional archival documentation reports that

> The local Consuls now are discovering our usefulness and are referring cases to us.... We handled immigration problems; deportation; naturalization; interpretation; investigation of fraudulent practices; application for visaes; domestic and social relationship; wage claims; simple legal matters; taxes; an unusual amount of unemployment; problems involving lost citizenship through marriage under the old law, where husband has acquired citizenship and the woman is temporarily without a

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> country; permits to reenter the United States; problems of immigrants entering to and from Canada either to gain residence here or a change of immigration status; cases of admissions to the United States under the provisions for students, visitors and agriculturists; cases of families being prevented from reuniting for months and years; children detained at Ellis Island and other ports and separated from parents and guardians because of illness; the most common of which is trachoma; and many other problems arising from the intricacies of the immigration and naturalization laws. (Box 3, Folder 15, 1928, IIMDR)

The International Institute of Detroit reports that their Alien Free Information Bureau assisted 10,430 cases or individuals with personal problems and rendered a total of 19,662 services to these individuals during the year 1927 (Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR). They reported that they were especially inundated with cases of problems of family reunification caused by the new restrictive immigration law of July 1924. The husbands and fathers who had immigrated before the new law were unable to unite with their wives, children, and elderly parents who they had left behind in their countries of origin (Sickels, 1945; Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR). "It was not possible for these men to foresee the provisions of the new law nor that the quotas for so many of the countries would be so greatly reduced" (Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR).

Thus, they helped immigrant children and families with the most central of their concerns regarding their survival in the United States. Maslow states in his hierarchy of needs that the basic physiological needs of food, clothing, and shelter are primary for survival. In the case of immigrants, these basic physiological needs as well as their psychological needs were contingent upon their legal status in the United States.

Perhaps parents today who are in similar situations are utilizing their psychological energy and time to address their legal status. It is therefore no surprise that they may not be actively involved in volunteering in the classroom, being on advisory boards, or maintaining regular communication with the school. First, teachers need to understand that these stresses and strains often prohibit parents from participating in school activities. Second, if these new immigrant families are so fortunate as to have close kin who can assume some of their parental roles in the schools, teachers should welcome, support, and truly accept the kin as much as the parent.

The International Institute of Detroit expanded its existing governmental collaborations from national to state and local levels. For example, they stated that they enjoyed the same "fine cooperation and spirit of helpfulness from the government representatives in Detroit having to do with immigration, emigration, deportation, and naturalization of aliens" (Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR). A second example is that they proposed their intention to work with the Congress to enact temporary measures to alleviate the suffering of separated families caused by the new restrictive immigration law of 1924, without modifying the principle of restrictive immigration. A third example is from the 1950s. At that time, the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit worked with the Michigan Employment Security Commission and provided employment counseling as well as vocational services to the immigrants who were admitted under the Displaced Persons Act of 1946 (Frontczak, 1953). Frontczak (1953) explained the reason for this collaboration as follows: "The cooperation in this endeavor between the tax supported agency and the private agency grew out of the separate strivings of the two facilities to serve the same group of people, with recognition on both sides that neither was able to provide the best possible service alone" (p. 63). Thus, these pieces of evidence suggest that they collaborated closely with government agencies and representatives in legislative advocacy for newcomers.

Collaborations with Industries and Businesses

The International Institute of Detroit worked in close partnership with industries by regularly distributing publicity materials about the Detroit Public Evening Schools, including their locations and course offerings. They offered this information at the beginning of each semester in September and January. The archival data of 1928 (Box 3, Folder 15, IIMDR) reported that during the previous year, "121 industries responded and pledged themselves to assist in conveying the message of opportunity offered by those schools to their foreign-born employees." They further noted

that "year in and year out response from Detroit's major industries is exceedingly helpful and reassuring." As a result of this collaboration, in 1927, the industries sent 8,425 of their workers to study in the evening high schools and 5,324 workers to study in the evening elementary schools. Their collaboration resulted in a total evening enrollment of 33,269 high school students and 24,573 elementary students. Twenty-five percent of the high school students and 75% of the elementary students were foreign born. The teachers of these classes were especially trained to teach English at the elementary grade level.

The citizenship teachers who prepared students for naturalization were nearly all hired from the civics departments of the day public schools. Thus, the collaboration between industries and the Institute was further supported by the public schools, by their providing space and qualified staff. Kwitkowsky (1955) reports that the Institute also collaborated with business organizations, such as the banks and insurance companies.

Conclusion: Effective Interagency Collaboration

In 1992, the United States General Accounting Office reported that linking services with families at risk appeared to be more effective than reform efforts (Roberts, Rule, & Innocenti, 1998). Thus, it is now recognized that we need to look beyond education in the classroom and start examining other components, such as social support services, to maximize the potentials of poor urban children, many of whom are immigrants. Federal legislation has therefore begun to place a higher priority on linking education with other support services that help children develop physically, socially, mentally, and emotionally (Lopez, Torres, & Norwood, 1998). The Detroit International Institute linked social services and education for children and families who were immigrants and therefore at risk. They addressed the priority of serving the whole child through collaboration—a strategy that is recommended currently. Furthermore, their services were in alignment with what is being recommended in modern times by the United States General Accounting office.

According to Aguirre (1995), today's "comprehensive, integrated services for children" should be family focused, broad based but flexible, involving major stakeholders in addressing solutions, and, finally, improving communitywide conditions. Given this definition, it is safe to say that the Detroit International Institute attempted to provide family-focused, comprehensive, and integrated service by collaborating with all the major stakeholders in the community to improve the conditions of immigrant children and families.

Furthermore, according to Nelson (2000), the Casey Foundation has designed a framework for understanding and strengthening America's current, vulnerable families. Their framework recommends that our society provide (1) economic opportunities that help families secure jobs and build assets, (2) social networks that offer help and promote positive relationships, and (3) high-quality and accessible formal supports and services that families can trust. This historical research indicates that the International Institute of Detroit collaborated with all the stakeholders mentioned by Nelson. As a result, this Institute historically was able to provide the components in the Casey Foundation framework.

Now, according to Wimpfheimer, Bloom, and Kramer (1990), there are four principles for effective interagency collaboration: (1) agencies mutually recognize a common problem; (2) agencies consider the issue as sufficiently high priority for them to collaborate and take action; (3) agencies have the authority, influence, and the resources to address their common concerns; and (4) agencies are creative, remain flexible, and combine unconventional ingredients in novel ways to achieve the desired outcomes. This historical case study documents that these four principles were operating and therefore that the Detroit International Institute was effective in collaborating with other agencies to promote the well-being of culturally diverse immigrant children and families by using these principles.

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